

THE
PROTECTION-MARK,
OR
A VIEW OF THE PRINCIPLES
most conducive to
NATIONAL and INDIVIDUAL SECURITY,
AT THIS
MOST IMPORTANT CRISIS,
considered in a
Sermon
preached at
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, MANCHESTER,
ON
WEDNESDAY
THE
27th. of February,
BEING THE DAY APPOINTED FOR
A
PUBLIC FAST.

BY
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RECTOR
of the said Church.

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IT is the earnest prayer of the Author of the following Discourse, that its publication may be found to answer the intentions of those very respectable names which solicited it, by leading every Reader to scrutinize conscientiously, in the sight and by the law of GOD, the ruling principles of his own life and conversation, as the only sure basis of protection under the present impending dangers.

ADVERTISEMENT

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the following Discourse, that its application
may be found to answer the intention of those
very respectable names which are inscribed in it, by
leading every Reader to ferocious conviction,
and, in the highest degree, to the law of GOD,
the ruling principles of his own life and con-
duct, as the only true basis of protection
under the present impending dangers.

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Ezech. ix. 4, 5, 6.

AND THE LORD SAID UNTO HIM, GO THROUGH THE MIDST OF THE CITY, THROUGH THE MIDST OF JERUSALEM, AND SET A MARK UPON THE FOREHEADS OF THE MEN THAT SIGH, AND THAT CRY FOR ALL THE ABOMINATIONS THAT BE DONE IN THE MIDST THEREOF.

AND TO THE OTHERS HE SAID IN MINE HEARING, GO YE AFTER HIM THROUGH THE CITY AND SMITE; LET NOT YOUR EYE SPARE, NEITHER HAVE YE PITY; BUT COME NOT NEAR ANY MAN UPON WHOM IS THE MARK.

THESE words are a part of the description of an awful judgment exercised by the LORD on Jerusalem, as it was seen in vision by the Prophet who records it.

The whole account runs thus — *He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near,* even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.*
And

* What is here rendered, "*Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near,*" may be otherwise rendered, "*The visitations of the city draw near,*" implying a time of judgment and desolation; and this latter rendering seems more agreeable to the tenor of what follows, in the same chapter.

And behold six men came from the way of the higher gate which lieth towards the north, and every man a slaughter-weapon in his band; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's ink-horn by his side; and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's ink-horn by his side. And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark.

A few observations on this extraordinary and awful vision of the Prophet will not, I trust, be either unsuitable or unedifying on the present solemn occasion, when we are assembled (now for the *seventh* time) to humble ourselves before the ALMIGHTY, under a sense of our sins, and to avert the terrible judgments which threaten our destruction, both as a people and as individuals.

And

And first — from the above account of the Prophet's Vision it is manifest, that all judgments, whether public or private ; all calamities and distresses, whether affecting nations or individuals ; are both under the view and under the controul of an all-merciful and all-wise Providence ; and further, that they are all grounded in some secret invisible cause, which respects the connection or non-connection of man with his God, according as he is obedient or disobedient to the divine law.

For what the Prophet saw, he saw in vision, that is to say, in the spirit, and not in the body. His spiritual eye was opened to penetrate through the dark crust of this material orb, and contemplate what was transacting in the upper regions of the invisible world. He was not of the number of those *bold infidels* at this day, who *deny* the existence of that world ; nor yet of those *weak Christians* who *doubt* it, and who through *doubt* set it at a *distance* : but he was convinced by the testimony of his senses, both that there *is* another world, and that it is *near* and *at hand*, being in the *closest connection* and most *open communication* with this world : he was convinced yet further, by the same sure testimony, that that other world is not an *empty* world of *shadows* only, as some are thoughtless

thoughtless enough to suppose, but that it is a world *full of realities*, and that in those *realities*, as in their proper and living sources, originate all the most wonderful phænomena, the grandest movements, and the most interesting transactions, manifested either in the form of good or evil, of the blessing or the curse, in this lower world of nature. For it was at a time, when the eyes of his spirit were miraculously opened to see into that world, that he there actually beheld the first awful preparations making for the destruction of his native city and country, long before the event itself came to pass. He saw also, that this event was not a thing of chance or accident, neither was it determined by the natural, or by the political character of his countrymen; it was alike unconnected with their riches, their greatness, their talents and their courage; because it was an event dependant only on their fear of the God who had chosen them for his people, and was therefore to be directed by this eternal and righteous law, *If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword.**

We may learn from these considerations much interesting information respecting the judgments
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* Isaiah I. xix. 20.

and calamities, which we are this day met to deplore and deprecate. Could we open our eyes, as the Prophet's were opened, to look into the invifible world of *caufes*, we fhould be inftructed, as he was, concerning the origin of all *effects* here below, and fhould be enabled to fee clearly, that the dreadful ftorms of trouble, which are now defolating the kingdoms of the earth, were both forefeen and provided for. We fhould difcover that the *fix men, with their slaughter-weapon in their hands*, who are now going about through the world, have received their appointment, and that every ftroke of their weapons is directed by an eternal law of divine forefight. We fhould difcover yet further, that the deftruction hath its caufe, and that this caufe is from a fpiritual origin, and this origin is SIN. The *slaughter-weapon* therefore is but an *instrument* in the hands of a *principal*, infinitely more terrible than itfelf. For the *principal* is rebellion againft the MOST HIGH; rejection of the counfels of the eternal truth, in heart, if not in profeflion, but often in both; a conſequent profligacy and diffipation of manners; a bold and carelefs indifference about crimes, only fo far as they expofe the criminal to the penalties inflicted by civil judicatures; in ſhort, an impious declaration in principle (though poſſibly prudence may refrain from

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expressing it in words) that the Creator of the world is altogether an indifferent spectator of its concerns. Thus the destruction which now threatens us, is a *double* destruction; it is the destruction both of our *bodies* and of our *souls*; both of our *temporal* and our *eternal* interests: It is a contest not of sword only against sword, or of the ambition and political intrigue of one Court against another; but it is a contest of *eternal principles*; of mind against mind, and opinion against opinion, touching things of the most momentous, because everlasting concern to man: For it is a contest of the folly which rejects a GOD, against the wisdom which acknowledges him; of the insanity which says with deliberate blasphemy, "*The LORD shall not see, neither shall the GOD of Jacob regard,*" against that sobriety of evangelical faith which replies, with the affection of a devout confidence, "*He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? **"

But further — The Prophet in his Vision had not only a view of the destroyers and of the instruments of destruction which were coming on his unhappy country, but he had also a view of the provision made of the MOST HIGH for security

* Psalm xciv. 9.

security and deliverance: for thus he writes, *Behold one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's ink-horn by his side; and the LORD called to this man, and said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof: And it follows, that the destroyers were commanded of the LORD, Come not near any man upon whom is the mark.*

How affecting is this account! but how full of consolation, and how full at the same time of divine admonition and instruction! The mercy of the Most High would not suffer *a single hair of the head to perish*, of those who feared him, and kept his commandments. In the midst of the most multiplied judgments, he remembered his everlasting covenant of blessing and of protection established with his chosen: he sent forth therefore his Angel of deliverance, to mark them with *the mark of discrimination*, with the blessed, the distinguishing characters of his approbation and of his defence, that when the ministers of destruction approached they might see *the mark*, and pass by.

And was the FATHER OF MANKIND thus watchful over his children in the days of old, to distinguish, and to protect, and shall He not

be alike watchful in the present days? Is his mercy changed, or *come to an end*? Or is *His arm shortened*, that He cannot *now* save, as He did in *times past*? Surely neither religion, nor reason, nor common sense will allow us to conclude so unfavourably and so falsely concerning the holy, the unchangeable GOD. No — *He who is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*, cannot be unmindful of his covenant *now*, any more than he was *formerly*; and therefore *the man clothed with linen, with a writer's ink-born by his side*, is still sent forth before the destroyers, to set the blessed mark of distinction and security on the foreheads of the Righteous.

But what do I say? or rather what do I see? Behold, whilst I am now speaking, the holy invisible Messenger of discrimination and salvation from the great JEHOVAH is at work throughout the world! Behold, he approaches near to the borders of our own land! He advances with solemn steps towards ourselves! He enters even into the sacred House of our present Assembly, and already his discerning eye hath penetrated with its piercing sight into the inmost recesses of all our spirits, where he fixes or refuses to fix the *salvation-mark* according to what he finds there, or finds wanting! But how is he astonished and grieved to discover,
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that some amongst us are utterly unprepared for his coming, and even disposed to doubt and disbelieve it! How is he astonished and grieved to find, that profligacy, folly, vanity, and thoughtlessness, more than any concern about our abominations, or our dangers, have taken possession of many hearts, and that so far from being qualified to receive the *protecting impression* of our GOD, in these terrible days of judgment and desolation, we are carelessly taking the contrary stamp of our corruptions, and thus printing on our foreheads the characters of *death*, when the ALMIGHTY was willing to have printed the characters of *life*!

Let it not be thought *enthusiasm*, or any departure from the sobriety of evangelical truth, to believe, that the *man clothed with linen*, with the *writer's ink-born by his side*, is thus going forth through the world at this day, as he did in days of old, and that in his judicial capacity He thus approaches and inspects each of us individually. It can never be enthusiasm to believe what the Word of God testifies, nor can there be any danger in such belief. The danger is, lest *being blinded by our passions*, and *assenting to nothing but the testimony of our senses*, we should refuse to admit the evidence of the eternal truth respecting the powers of the invisible

visible world, their continual nearness to us, and the constancy and uniformity of their operations in ourselves, and in every thing around us. Had this danger been seen and rightly guarded against, I will be bold to say, we should never have witnessed the calamities which at present threaten the destruction of Christendom and of the world. Had Christians been wise, according to the wisdom of their Bibles, to keep the eyes of their minds ever open to, and looking on the *man clothed with linen, with the writer's ink-born by his side*, coming to impress the holy mark of preservation, they might then have rested in the comfortable security, that the *six men with their slaughter-weapons in their hands* would never have gone forth to desolate the earth. But the misfortune is, (for the truth, howsoever melancholy, ought not to be concealed) the misfortune, I say, is, that Christendom has fallen, even with the Bible in her hands, into a dreadful state of infidelity respecting the contents of the Holy Book; and the present unparalleled calamities, under which she groans, are at once the miserable fruits and the manifest proofs of her unfaithfulness: Departing with her affections from the wisdom and order of the Most High God, as made known in His Word, she departed at the same time from the blessings of
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the divine presence and the securities of the divine power, with which that wisdom and order are ever connected and encompassed: and falling, of inevitable consequence, under the guidance and government of her own self-derived intelligence, which she had the wickedness and the folly to substitute in the place of revealed truth, she plunged from that instant down the precipice of her ruin, until she reached by degrees the deep abyss of her present miseries, which are the natural and necessary offspring and tormentors of human abilities, talents and science, when separated from their divine original. May it be our wisdom to take warning, ere it be too late, from the sad example before our eyes! May the *slaughter-weapon* now plunged in the bosom of Christendom be our awful instructor, that the WORD OF GOD alone contains and conveys the principles of human security, and that all that is called great, and wise, and excellent amongst men, if it be not in some connection with the eternal life and order derived from that eternal Word, does but *sharpen the edge of the weapon of destruction*, by multiplying crimes, and thus generating its own death, according to the degree of its fancied greatness, wisdom and excellence! May the *man clothed with linen* be further

further both our instructor and comforter, by convincing us that the limit of judgment is precisely defined, and that as we can only perish by trusting in ourselves more than in God, and exalting our own folly above his divine Word, so, whensoever we are wise to pass this boundary of the region of desolation and death, by submitting ourselves to be taught of the ALMIGHTY, we shall enter into the blessed land of protection and life, where the *weapon of slaughter* is under the controul of this eternal and righteous law, *Come not near any man on whom is the mark.*

But further—the enlightened Prophet was not only permitted to see the future *destroyers* of his country, and also the *man who was to make the mark of salvation*, but he was permitted likewise to see *the quality* of this mark, or what it was which the mark implied, for thus it is written, “Set a mark upon the foreheads of “the men, *that sigh, and that cry for all the “abominations that be done in the midst of the city.*”

Permit me to call your most awakened attention to this *quality of the mark*, because, as there is every reason to believe that *the man clothed with linen* is at this day going forth through our land, as he went formerly through the land of Judæa, to mark the foreheads of such as are
worthy,

worthy, so there is every reason to believe further, that the *mark* will be stamped according to the same rule of distinction, viz. upon the foreheads of those only, *that sigh*, and *that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of the city*.

But what shall we say is implied in this distinction, *that sigh*, and *that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of the city*? The words are certainly plain enough to be understood, so that none can possibly misconceive or misinterpret them, but such as are willing to shut their eyes against the truth, and abide in darkness. For *to sigh* and *to cry for abominations*, manifestly implies these three things, first, that through the grace and wisdom of GOD, we *carefully* and *conscientiously* note, both in ourselves and in the world about us, every *abominable thing* which is contrary to GOD, such as our natural pride and covetousness; our sensualities; our love of pleasure more than of GOD; our love of ourselves more than of our neighbour; our coldness, reserve, and inconsistency in GOD's service, whilst the world and the flesh always find us warm, active and steady in their service; in short, all our disorders and all our follies, as made known to us by the pure and holy law of JESUS CHRIST; for until these

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things be *noted*, and *noted attentively*, it is impossible we should either *sigh* or *cry* for them. Secondly, it implies, that when the abominable thing, by serious consideration and examination, is thus discovered and noted, it should further be *held in abhorrence* and *detested*; it should not be looked at with indifference; but it should excite a *just horror* and *serious concern*, both as to its heinousness and its consequences. And thirdly, it implies, that when the abominable thing is thus both *seen* and *felt*, we should then lift up our voices against it; we should *cry mightily* unto the OMNIPOTENT for help; we should not rest satisfied under a sight and sense of the *abomination*, but we should pour out what the Apostle calls *prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears*, to the GREAT REDEEMER,* for its remedy and removal.

Behold

* The Author wishes to lay particular stress upon the *divine object of prayer and supplication* here pointed at, viz. the GREAT REDEEMER, because there is too much reason to apprehend, that this high and holy being, whose name is JESUS CHRIST, is not immediately approached at this day, by the generality of christians, as the *supreme and sole* object of worship and adoration. But is not this neglect to be reckoned as one amongst the many *abominations in the midst of the city*, which call more especially for our *sighs and cries* at this hour of distress and danger? For if JESUS CHRIST be *one* with the eternal FATHER; if *he dwells in the Father*, and *the Father in him*; if *all who have seen him, have seen the FATHER*; and if *no man cometh to the FATHER but by (or through) him*; then how plain is it to see, that in immediately approaching to JESUS CHRIST in worship, we approach unto the Father at the same time; but if we do not approach

Behold here the blessed *mark* of distinction, which is the declared security from the God of Heaven, against the destruction both of nations and of individuals! Behold therefore the *one thing needful* for the protection of ourselves and of our country, against the ruin which our implacable enemies at present meditate! The question of defence doth not turn upon any *national advantages* we may enjoy, either respecting our numbers, our courage, our situation, our resources, or our former successes, for in regard to these and like dependencies we may adopt the language of ancient wisdom, and say still, *there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few*. The question doth not even turn upon our *national religion*, if by national religion we understand a mere *lip-assent* to the doctrines of revelation, and a mere *verbal confession of faith* grounded in such assent; for it is possible, and every day's experience demonstrates the sad possibility, that a man may repeat a *national creed*, and yet have no religion; he
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approach immediately unto JESUS CHRIST, we can then have no access to, or communication with the invisible FATHER!

May every reader be led to serious examination of himself on this important subject, that so he may discover whether he be wisely *entering through the Door into the sheep-fold*, or be rashly and ignorantly attempting to climb up some other way!

may even have the *mark of a national faith* stamped on his *infant forehead* by the *minister of baptism*, and yet may be without the *mark of a saving faith* stamped on his *adult forehead* by the *man clothed with linen*. But the question of defence, according to the decision of the eternal God, rests here—How are we affected respecting national and individual sin? Do we *sigh* and *cry* for our public and private abominations? I do not ask concerning that *gloomy melancholy*, the child of worldly disappointment and peevish chagrine, which some, alas! mistake for evangelical contrition. Neither do I ask concerning that spirit of *harsh judgment*, generated by a secret but defiled self-love, which is too often disposed to pass severe censure on the conduct of others, without examining its own: Nor yet do I ask concerning that *transitory tear* of sorrow for sin, which is sometimes excited more by the immediate *penalties* of transgression, than by *compunction* of conscience, and *sense of guilt before God*. But I ask, (because it is the enquiry of the Almighty himself) and I call upon every one who now hears me to ask also, concerning the genuine spirit of *gospel penitence* and of *gospel piety*, how far it is *our's*, or *not our's*? I ask therefore concerning that *humble and contrite heart*, which is impressed with a deep and feeling
 sense

sense of the nature, the extent, and the terrible malignity of offences against a HOLY GOD, and which, in consequence of that sense, earnestly implores pardon, purification and deliverance. The enquiry therefore is virtually this—Have we *any* religion, or have we *no* religion? For if we have *no* sight, *no* sense, *no* horror at, *no* detestation of, those *abominations*, those anti-christian principles and practices in the world, which are contrary to the word and the holiness of JESUS CHRIST, we may then take it for an undeniable truth, that as yet we have *no* religion; as yet, let our profession be what it will, we do *not* believe the Gospel; as yet therefore we side with the enemies and destroyers of our country; and when *the man clothed with linen* approaches and inspects us with his bright discerning eye, instead of fixing on our foreheads his blessed *mark* of life and protection, he will leave us *unmarked*, because *unsanctified*, to the ministers of death and destruction.

But then, on the other hand, if we have begun to *sigh* and to *cry* for our *abominations*, under a due sense of what they are, and of what they lead to; if we have truly repented of our sins before the great and holy GOD, and turned unto that manifested SAVIOUR, whose name is JESUS CHRIST, for remission, for purification

cation, for redemption, and regeneration; if we have thus risen out of the regions of disorder, which are the regions of destruction, and laboured to fix our abode in the higher regions of the eternal order, by fulfilling its holy and eternal laws; we may then indulge the comfortable trust, that the spirit of true religion, which is the spirit of JESUS CHRIST, dwells in us, and is forming us after its own heavenly image and likeness; and in this case, the ministers of death cannot touch or approach us, because *the man clothed with linen* hath already impressed on our foreheads his protecting and saving mark of eternal distinction and separation.

To conclude — To every thinking mind it must be sufficiently obvious from what hath been said, that he is the best friend, and most powerful protector of his country, at the present awful crisis, who is most earnest and diligent to secure on his *forehead* the above *mysterious mark* of divine approbation and defence.

It by no means follows from this consideration, nor do I wish to insinuate by it, that no other mode of exertion is necessary. To repel an unprincipled and daring enemy, we must use the sword, and use it both with skill and
courage,

courage, and therefore it is expedient that our commanders be wise, and our soldiers brave. It is expedient also, that they, whom Providence has blessed with wealth, should be liberal in the application of it, to support the public exigencies. But then, whatsoever security may be derived either from the *sword*, or from the *purse*, either from national courage or from national liberality, it ought certainly to be remembered, and remembered seriously, that this security is but in itself a *subordinate* security, and that if separated from the higher, the stronger bulwark of evangelical penitence and piety, it is but as that *wall daubed with untempered mortar*, of which it is written in the prophet, *Thus saith the LORD GOD, I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger; and great hail-stones in my fury to consume it.* (Ezech. xiii. 13.) So is every means of national defence, when separated from the *tear of penitence*, from the *sigh* and *cry* of a contrite spirit.

But some will perhaps still contend, and say that our *late successes* are security sufficient; that our commerce is thereby extended; the power of the enemy crippled; and our land delivered from the alarm of the destroying invader. It is well; and we cannot be enough thankful to
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a kind Providence for those successes and for their consequences: But then, it ought surely to be considered and asked, Is it wise, or can it be safe, to trust to those successes more than to their *causes*? And if there be good reason to believe, that our present prosperity is but the *effect* of former penitence and humiliation; that our extended commerce, and our deliverance from alarm, are but the result of the *holy*, the *saving mark* which our *sighs* and *cries* of contrition have heretofore stamped on our foreheads; then surely it will be both our prudence and our security to attend to these *causes* in future; to take good heed I say, that *the man clothed with linen, with the writer's ink-born by his side*, may still find us prepared to receive his holy protecting impression.

Be this then the wise, this the secure rule of our future conduct! Let the *mark* of the heavenly messenger be regarded as the first object of our concern. Let us never pass a day without *putting our hands devoutly to our foreheads*, to feel for this blessed *mark*. Let us consider it as the only sure test whether we have any religion or not. For without *repentance*, what is religion, but like that treacherous apostle of old, who *at the same instant* kissed and betrayed his divine master? And without *sighing* and
crying

*erying for our abominations, what is repentance, but like that salt which hath lost its savour, of which the Redeemer saith, It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out?**

Let us believe further, and be fully persuaded, that all our future prosperities will depend upon, and be regulated by the *divine impression* we now take, or refuse to take. Are we training to the honourable use of arms in our country's defence? Let us never think ourselves qualified to rank under *the standard of loyalty to our King*, until we have first ranked under *the higher standard of repentance towards our God*. Are we engaged in the no less honourable pursuits of trade and commerce? Let us never forget, that unless we maintain *commerce with Heaven* by devout supplication and contrition, and give this the uppermost place in our affections, even our successes in every other commerce will but tend to our destruction. In short, whatsoever we do, or purpose to do at this important crisis, let us be wise to keep in view, and to secure on our foreheads the *mark*, the blessed and saving *mark of the man clothed with linen*, from a sure conviction that this *mark*, both in lustre, in defence, in dignity, and in duration, infinitely excels every other *mark* of human distinction, blessed-

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ness, and preheminance: for when all the wealth and grandeur of this world shall be laid in the dust, and perish; when titles, and power, and pleasure, and whatsoever else stamps its present impression on the heart of man, shall lose its enchanting and delusive influence, then shall the mark of *the man clothed with linen* be seen to brighten in splendour and in beauty on the foreheads of the righteous; and then too shall be felt in their full extent and efficacy of consolation by the penitent and the pious, those divine words of JEHOVAH to the ministers of destruction, *Come not near any man on whom is the mark.* AMEN.

By the same Author,

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